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RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 3528
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA PRIORITY 2460
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 2134

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BEIJING 001172

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR EAP/CM, IO/UNP

E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/30/2024

TAGS: [PREL](#) [UNSC](#) [KUNR](#) [UN](#) [CH](#) [JA](#) [RS](#)

SUBJECT: PRC: CHINESE SCHOLARS SUGGEST ACHIEVING NEAR-TERM
UN SECURITY COUNCIL REFORM DIFFICULT, UNWARRANTED

Classified By: Minister-Counselor for Political Affairs
Aubrey Carlson, reasons 1.4 (b/d).

11. (C) SUMMARY: Chinese participants at a UK/France-sponsored seminar on UN Security Council Reform April 29 uniformly affirmed the need for UN Security Council reform, though none expressed any urgency in acting on this need. While offering generally positive views of the UK/France "intermediate option" for UNSC reform, many participants did not support specific elements in the proposal, including establishing criteria for the longer-term, renewable seats. Participants were divided on the basic elements of categories of membership, regional representation, and size of UNSC expansion, and suggested that disagreement among UN member states over the basic elements of UNSC reform might be difficult to overcome, thus dooming any meaningful UNSC reform efforts in the near future. A number suggested that the G-20 grouping would become a more relevant forum for addressing issues currently within the purview of the UN Security Council. End Summary.

Conference Details

12. (C) Four Chinese academics, one former PRC diplomat and UN official, and a representative of the Russian Embassy, in addition to PolOffs, participated in an April 29 invitation-only seminar on UN Security Council reform sponsored by the British and French Embassies and the Brookings-Tsinghua Center for Public Policy.

The Need for UNSC Reform

13. (C) Chinese participants uniformly affirmed the need for UN Security Council reform. Chen Xulong from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs-affiliated China Institute of International Studies (CIIS) said a new world order needed a new government structure, and Gao Zugui, Director of the Center for Strategic Studies of the Ministry of State Security-affiliated China Institutes of Contemporary International Relations (CICIR), said the new threats of the 21st century required UNSC reform. Li Dongyan from the China Academy of Social Sciences (CASS) added that reform was needed to make the UNSC more accountable and transparent. However, she said China was both supportive and "cautious and defensive" in its approach to Council reform. Chairman of the UN Association of China Chen Jian, former UN Undersecretary General and former PRC Ambassador to Japan, said "Council reform is overdue, but the fundamental resolution of Security Council reform is pre-mature." Expanding on this paradox, Chen noted that while the world had evolved significantly since WWII, creating the necessity

for a more representative, effective and legitimate Security Council, no precipitating events had occurred since WWII that had raised the status of any country to the leadership level of the current P-5 countries.

In No Rush

¶4. (C) Despite being pressed a number of times by the French Embassy representative on the consequences of failing to act on reform, none of the Chinese participants expressed any urgency to implement UN Security Council reform. Ambassador Chen said that the UN Security Council reform process was an "evolution" not a "revolution," and any workable solution had to be an "interim" one, adding that no chronological "landmark" existed to serve as a deadline for UN reform. CICIR's Gao suggested that reforming the IMF was a more urgent task and one that would delay for one or two years UN Security Council reform efforts.

Receptive to the "Intermediate Option"

¶5. (C) Participants offered mixed but generally positive views of the UK/France "intermediate option." Some criticized the idea of establishing criteria for determining countries' eligibility for longer-term, renewable seats rather than deciding such membership through elections, saying a criteria-based system might increase the effectiveness of the UN Security Council but would also sacrifice its representativeness and legitimacy.

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"Negotiations on criteria would take a decade," Ambassador Chen quipped. CICIR's Gao noted that states with no opportunity for selection to the Security Council "would not accept any solution," so while the United Kingdom and France emphasized "global contributions" as the most important criteria for UNSC membership selection, regional support was even more important. Ambassador Chen added that regional elections to the new UNSC seats would "lend legitimacy." If countries wanted to be reelected, he continued, "they must live in harmony with their neighbors."

Disparate Blueprints on Representation and Size

¶6. (C) Chinese participants suggested that disagreement among UN member states over the basic elements of UNSC reform might be difficult to overcome, thus dooming any meaningful UNSC reform efforts in the near future. Participants themselves were divided on the basic elements of reform, including categories of membership, regional representation, and size of UNSC expansion. Taking a minimalist approach, Ambassador Chen proposed revising Article 23 of the UN Charter to allow non-permanent member countries to be re-elected to the Security Council, a notion supported by the Russian Embassy representative. CIIS's Chen Xulong proposed four categories of membership: 1) P5 members with veto power; 2) 4-5 new permanent members; 3) 5 quasi-permanent members; 4) 10 non-permanent members. CICIR's Gao said the core of UNSC reform was enlargement and proposed that at least 6-10 new seats be added, with developing states (especially from Africa and Latin America) getting priority. CASS's Li Dongyan similarly suggested adding two permanent seats for Latin America and Africa and creating an additional six new regional seats with five-year terms.

¶7. (C) Renmin University School of International Studies Professor Pang Zhongying took a different tack, suggesting UNSC reformers draw lessons from the problems of European Union enlargement. He proposed adding just two African seats and one Latin American seat, noting problems with potential permanent members such as the G-4 (Japan, Germany, Brazil and India). Pang labeled both Japan and Germany as "controversial" choices for permanent membership, and

highlighted Japan in particular, as "not constructive" in its international role.

Unanimity on No Veto Expansion

18. (C) While most participants suggested that UNSC expansion of up to 25 members would be feasible, none suggested expanding veto power beyond the P5 members. (The Russian Embassy representative commented that a UNSC with over 25 members was "exorbitant.") CASS's Li assessed that the current veto-wielding P5 members reflected "today's balance of power." CIIS's Chen Xulong agreed, remarking that the current veto alignment "reflects today's world order" but that the veto issue was also "the main sticking point dividing member states." CIIS' Chen Xulong suggested that P5 unanimity on the veto question was necessary to build a larger consensus in the UN.

G-20: Ersatz Expanded UNSC?

19. (C) A number of participants suggested that the G-20 grouping would become a more relevant forum for addressing issues currently within the purview of the UN Security Council. Ambassador Chen remarked that the G-8 had begun as an economic group, and then started to tackle political issues, and perhaps the G-20 might do the same. If the G-20 became even more successful in resolving global challenges, "is the Security Council even necessary?" he asked. Renmin University's Pang expressed hope that the United Nations and Breton Woods system would be merged and integrated to reflect the realities of this century.
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